

MEATH SCHOOL

PANDEMIC FLU PLAN

AIMS OF THE PLAN

This plan has been developed to allow Meath School to think ahead and implement an effective plan should there be a pandemic flu outbreak in Britain. Our aims are:

- To ensure minimal interruption in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak
- To maintain control of the situation and prevent the spread of infection
- To increase staff, parents'/carers' and pupils' awareness

WHAT IS PANDEMIC FLU?

Pandemic flu is a type of influenza that occurs every few decades and which spreads rapidly to affect most countries and regions around the world. The symptoms of pandemic flu are similar to those of 'ordinary' flu but are usually more severe.

Flu viruses are constantly changing, producing new strains. Pandemics occur when a virus develops that is so different from previously circulating strains that few, if any, people have any immunity to it. This allows it to spread widely and rapidly, affecting many hundreds of thousands of people.

A new pandemic virus may emerge through the mixing of human flu virus with an animal flu virus [usually a bird (avian) flu virus]. It may affect around 25% of the population and people of every age may be at risk of serious illness. A vaccine will become available, and when it does so the aim will be to immunize the whole population as rapidly as possible.

COMMUNICATION

Clear communication is critical in providing staff, parents/carers and pupils with a full understanding of their role in the plan. It will also alleviate fears and prevent uncoordinated and hasty decision-making.

- The Pandemic flu plan will be made known to all staff and be posted on the Meath section of the I CAN website.
- This website will also provide a link to the Department of Health Protection Agency and World Health Organisation websites which will contain the most up to date information on a national/ international level.
- Parents/carers will be asked to watch this website or telephone the school for the most up-to-date picture of the situation.
- The school will share all local and national guidance for schools with families.

EARLY PLANNING

- In the event of both the Head and Deputy contracting the virus at the same time, leadership will pass to the following in the following order:; Head of Therapy; Residential Services Manager.
- Plastic bags, soap, tissues and antiseptic solution or wipes will be in stock and stored until required for use.
- All parents/carers will be reminded to ensure that their contact details, including secondary contacts, are up to date.
- The School Emergency Plan is updated regularly with contact numbers of all parents/carers, staff and governors along with contact details for I CAN and the Local Education Authority.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Children are highly efficient 'spreaders' of respiratory infections, both among themselves and to adults in their families. Evidence suggests that such infections spread less in holiday periods than in term-time. So, closing schools for a period might significantly reduce the number of children infected.

Central Government will advise whether schools in affected areas should stay open or close, on the basis of scientific advice. If the Government were to advise closure, LA's would communicate the message to schools. LA's – acting on local health information – would inform schools when their area is affected and the advice to close applies. If there is advice to close all schools in an area, the LA would tell schools when this advice will be reviewed; after such a review, the LA would advise schools whether to remain closed or to reopen, and, if they are to re-open, whether any specific conditions should apply.

The decision to close/reopen the school will be taken by the Chair of Governors and the Head teacher when notified by the LA/Government. Meath School will be required to follow the advice of Surrey LA and Primary Care Trust.

SCHOOL REMAINS OPEN – STEPS TO TAKE:

- The school will operate as normally as possible but plan for staff absence at a much higher level. We have a list of regular supply teachers, all of whom have previously worked here, and who can be called upon for help if required.
- There may be disruption in any area of the school and staff should be prepared to cover absenteeism and may have to perform jobs beyond their normal duties, e.g. cleaning, supervision, etc.
- Should the kitchen staff fall ill, we may ask parents/carers and staff to provide packed lunches.
- Children who become sick during the day will be cared for in the school medical room/sick bay, thus being separated from other pupils and minimising contact with staff until they are collected by their parents/carers.
- Parents/carers are asked to be extra vigilant in watching for flu symptoms in their children and if they are concerned, they should keep their child at home and contact their doctor's surgery. Bringing their child to school, or to the surgery, greatly increases the risk of spreading the virus.
- If any member of staff shows signs of infection they will be sent home. If members of immediate family of staff become ill the staff member may need to remain at home.
- We will provide the LA with any information requested, i.e. absence rates, etc.
- After school activities and overnight opportunities may have to be postponed.

BASIC MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INFECTION

All staff and pupils should adhere to the following guidelines to prevent the spread of infection:

- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue whenever possible.
- Dispose of dirty tissues promptly and carefully – bag and bin them. Plastic bags will be available in all classrooms which should be regularly tied up and disposed of in the dustbins.
- Maintain good hygiene – washing hands frequently in soap and water protects against picking up the virus from surfaces and passing it on. Pupils will be instructed to wash their hands with soap at break, before and after lunch and before going home.
- Extra supplies of bags, soap and tissues are kept in the stock cupboard.

As well as the above we have introduced extra cleaning measures:

- Regularly wiping door handles and phones – the cleaners will do this each evening but staff should ensure their area/classroom is as clean as possible during the day and may have to step in to clean during the evening in the event the cleaners are infected by the virus.
- Antiseptic and germicidal cleaning materials have been increased and cleaning staff have been made aware of the need for extra thoroughness and vigilance during this period.
- We have introduced new dispensers which provide soap without the hands needing to come into contact with the machine.

SCHOOL CLOSES – STEPS TO TAKE:

If the LA/I CAN orders the school to close the Chair of Governors and the Head teacher will inform the SLG, staff and parents/carers accordingly.

- Staff should come into school, unless ill, caring for dependants or authorised to work elsewhere.
- Teachers have a duty to provide education for children of compulsory school age who are out of school. The staff not affected by the virus will be advised whether this is possible for our pupils.
- Should the Government introduce limitations on the movement of people which affect our pupils, the school will remain open for all staff and for those pupils not affected by the restrictions.
- Parents/carers will be advised to watch for notices and information placed on the I CAN website.
- Telephones will be constantly manned in order to provide the latest guidance and information.

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